

Atomic Habits

The Fundamentals.

Why Tiny Changes Make a Big Difference

1. The Surprising Power of Atomic Habit.

- a. Relentless commitment to a strategy called “the aggregation of marginal gain”.
- b. Whether it is losing weight, building a business, writing a book, winning a championship, or achieving any other goal, we put pressure on ourselves to make some earth-shattering improvement that everyone will talk about.
 - i. Meanwhile, improving by 1 percent isn’t particularly notable—sometimes it isn’t even noticeable—but it can be far more meaningful, especially in the long run. The difference a tiny improvement can make over time is astounding.
 - ii. Here’s how the math works out: if you can get 1 percent better each day for one year, you’ll end up thirty-seven times better by the time you’re done. Conversely, if you get 1 percent worse each day for one year, you’ll decline nearly down to zero. What starts as a small win or a minor setback accumulates into something much more.
- c. Are you spending less than you earn each month? Are you making it into the gym each week? Are you reading books and learning something new each day? Tiny battles like these are the ones that will define your future self.
- d. Good habits make time your ally. Bad habits make time your enemy.
- e. **Positive Compounding**

- i. Productivity compounds. Accomplishing one extra task is a small feat on any given day, but it counts for a lot over an entire career. The effect of automating an old task or mastering a new skill can be even greater. The more tasks you can handle without thinking, the more your brain is free to focus on other areas.
- ii. Knowledge compounds. Learning one new idea won't make you a genius, but a commitment to lifelong learning can be transformative. Furthermore, each book you read not only teaches you something new but also opens up different ways of thinking about old ideas. As Warren Buffett says, "That's how knowledge works. It builds up, like compound interest."
- iii. Relationships compound. People reflect your behavior back to you. The more you help others, the more others want to help you. Being a little bit nicer in each interaction can result in a network of broad and strong connections over time.

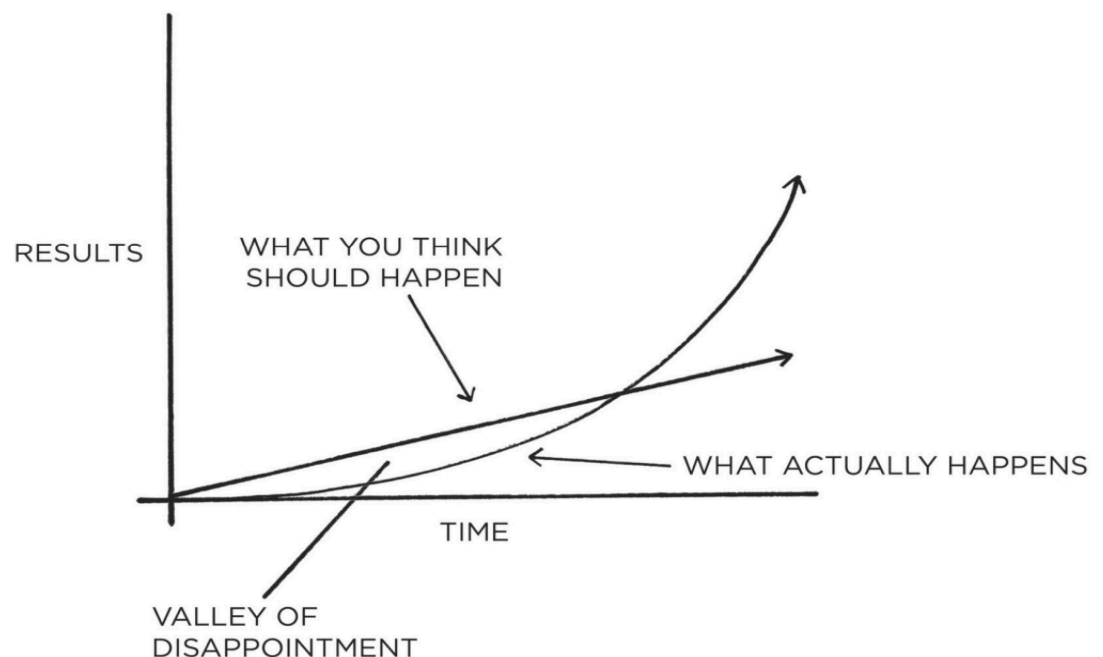
f. Negative Compounding

- i. Stress compounds. The frustration of a traffic jam. The weight of parenting responsibilities. The worry of making ends meet. The strain of slightly high blood pressure. By themselves, these common causes of stress are manageable. But when they persist for years, little stresses compound into serious health issues.
- ii. Negative thoughts compound. The more you think of yourself as worthless, stupid, or ugly, the more you condition yourself to interpret life that way. You get trapped in a thought loop. The same is true for how you think about others. Once you fall into the habit of seeing people as angry, unjust, or selfish, you see those kind of people everywhere.

- iii. Outrage compounds. Riots, protests, and mass movements are rarely the result of a single event. Instead, a long series of microaggressions and daily aggravations slowly multiply until one event tips the scales and outrage spreads like wildfire.

g. The Plateau of Latent Potential

THE PLATEAU OF LATENT POTENTIAL



h. Chapter Summary

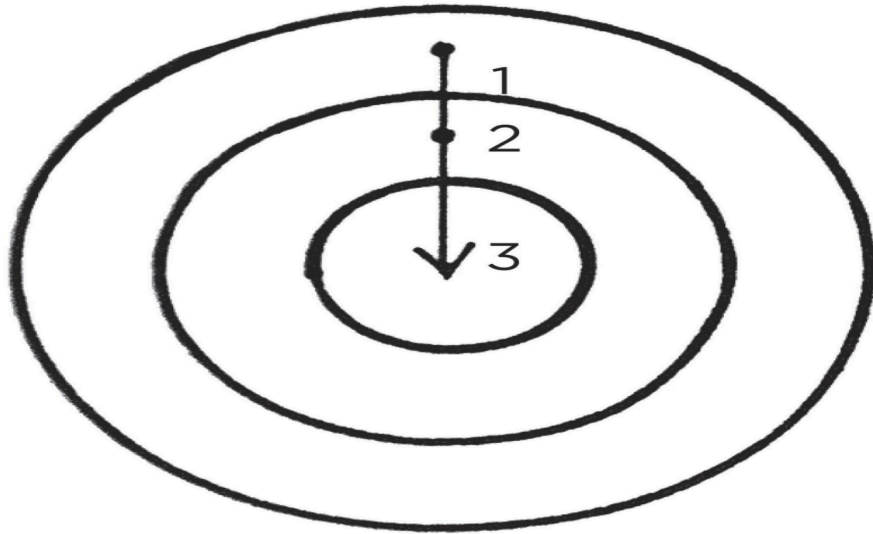
- i. Habits are the compound interest of self-improvement. Getting 1 percent better every day counts for a lot in the long-run.
- ii. Habits are a double-edged sword. They can work for you or against you, which is why understanding the details is essential.
- iii. Small changes often appear to make no difference until you cross a critical threshold. The most powerful outcomes of any compounding process are delayed. You need to be patient.

- iv. An atomic habit is a little habit that is part of a larger system. Just as atoms are the building blocks of molecules, atomic habits are the building blocks of remarkable results.
- v. If you want better results, then forget about setting goals. Focus on your system instead.
- vi. You do not rise to the level of your goals. You fall to the level of your systems.

2. How habits change your identity and vice versa.

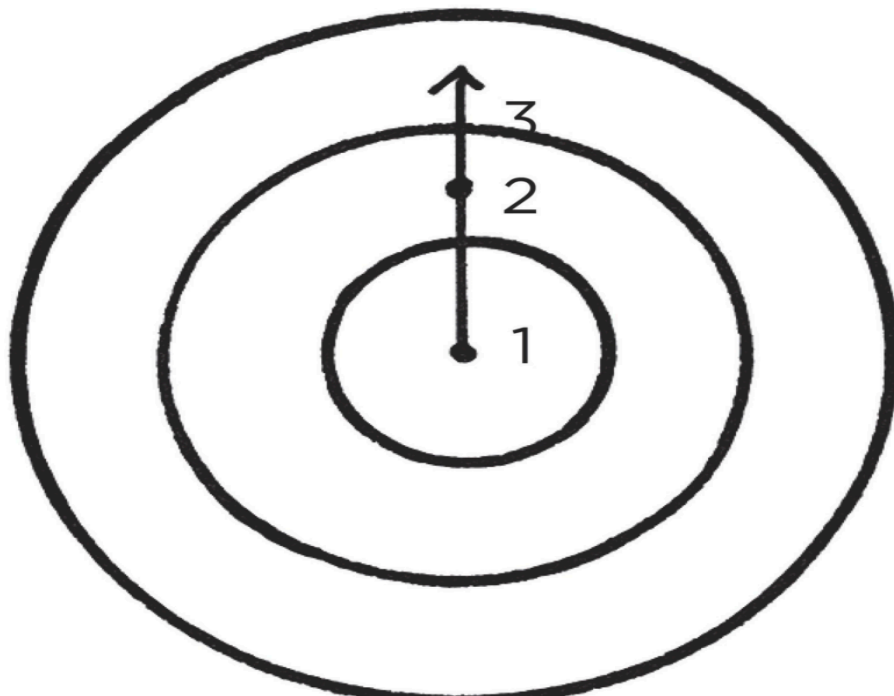
- a. “Changing our habits is challenging for two reasons: (1) we try to change the wrong thing and (2) we try to change our habits in the wrong way.”
- b. “There are three layers of behavior change: a change in your outcomes, a change in your processes, or a change in your identity.”
- c. “Outcomes are about what you get. Processes are about what you do. Identity is about what you believe.”
- d. “With outcome-based habits, the focus is on what you want to achieve.

OUTCOME-BASED HABITS



IDENTITY-BASED HABITS

With identity-based habits, the focus is on who you wish to become.”



- e. “The ultimate form of intrinsic motivation is when a habit becomes part of your identity.”

- f. “It is a simple two-step process: Decide the type of person you want to be. Prove it to yourself with small wins.”
- g. “Ask yourself, “Who is the type of person that could get the outcome I want?”
- h. “The most effective way to change your habits is to focus not on what you want to achieve, but on who you wish to become.”
- i. “Your identity emerges out of your habits. Every action is a vote for the type of person you wish to become.”
- j. “Becoming the best version of yourself requires you to continuously edit your beliefs, and to upgrade and expand your identity.”
- k. “The real reason habits matter is not because they can get you better results (although they can do that), but because they can change your beliefs about yourself.”

3. How to build better habits in 4 simple steps.

- a. How to create a good habit:
 - i. Cue -> make it obvious.
 - ii. Craving -> make it attractive.
 - iii. Response -> make it easy.
 - iv. Reward -> make it satisfying.
- b. How to break a bad habit:
 - i. Cue -> make it invisible.
 - ii. Craving -> make it unattractive.
 - iii. Response -> make it difficult.
 - iv. Reward -> make it unsatisfying.

- c. “A habit is a behavior that has been repeated enough times to become automatic.”
- d. The ultimate purpose of habits is to solve the problems of life with as little energy and effort as possible.
- e. Any habit can be broken down into a feedback loop that involves four steps: **cue, craving, response, and reward.**
- f. Whenever you want to change your behavior, you can simply ask yourself:
 - i. How can I make it obvious?
 - ii. How can I make it attractive?
 - iii. How can I make it easy?
 - iv. How can I make it satisfying?

The 1st LAW.

Make It Obvious.

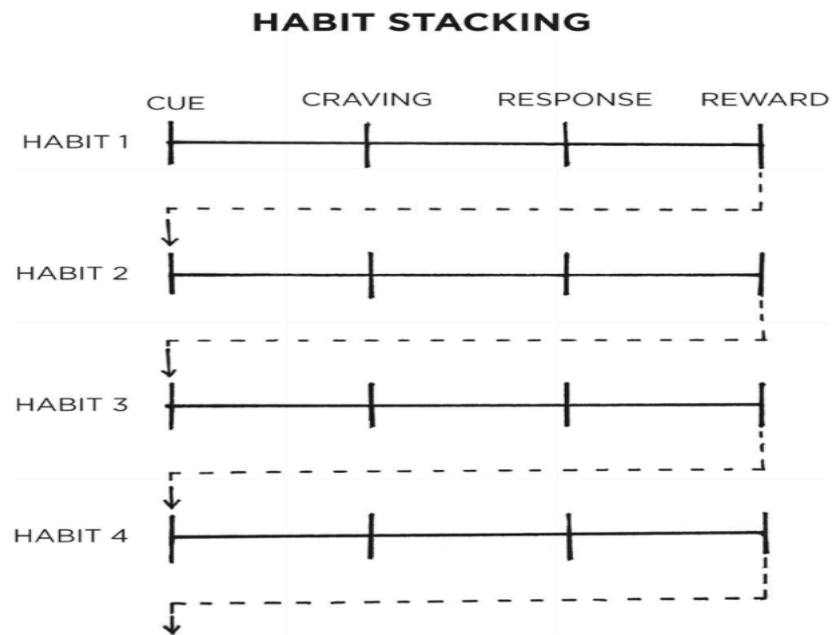
1. The Man Who Didn't Look Right

- a. “If you're having trouble determining how to rate a particular habit, ask yourself: ‘Does this behavior help me become the type of person I wish to be? Does this habit cast a vote for or against my desired identity?’”
- b. “With enough practice, your brain will pick up on the cues that predict certain outcomes without consciously thinking about it.”
- c. “Once our habits become automatic, we stop paying attention to what we are doing.”

- d. “The process of behavior change always starts with awareness. You need to be aware of your habits before you can change them.”
- e. “Pointing-and-Calling raises your level of awareness from a nonconscious habit to a more conscious level by verbalizing your actions.”
- f. “The Habits Scorecard is a simple exercise you can use to become more aware of your behavior.”

2. The Best Way to Start a New Habit

- a. “The 1st Law of Behavior Change is make it obvious.”
- b. “Many people think they lack motivation when what they really lack is clarity.”
- c. “The Diderot Effect states that obtaining a new possession often creates a spiral of consumption that leads to additional purchases.”
- d. “One of the best ways to build a new habit is to identify a current habit you already do each day and then stack your new behavior on top. This is called habit stacking.”



- i.
- e. “The habit stacking formula is: ‘After [CURRENT HABIT], I will [NEW HABIT].’”
- f. “The two most common cues are time and location.”
- g. “Creating an implementation intention is a strategy you can use to pair a new habit with a specific time and location.”
- h. “The implementation intention formula is: I will [BEHAVIOR] at [TIME] in [LOCATION].”
- i. “Habit stacking is a strategy you can use to pair a new habit with a current habit.”
- j. “The habit stacking formula is: After [CURRENT HABIT], I will [NEW HABIT].”
- k. One way to find the right trigger for your habit stack is by brainstorming a list of your current habits.
 - i. You can use your Habits Scorecard from the last chapter as a starting point.

- ii. Alternatively, you can create a list with two columns. In the first column, write down the habits you do each day without fail.

1. For example:
2. Get out of bed.
3. Take a shower.
4. Brush your teeth.
5. Get dressed.
6. Brew a cup of coffee.
7. Eat breakfast.
8. Take the kids to school.
9. Start the work day.
10. Eat lunch.
11. End the work day.
12. Change out of work clothes.
13. Sit down for dinner.
14. Turn off the lights.
15. Get into bed.

- iii. Your list can be much longer, but you get the idea. In the second column, write down all of the things that happen to you each day without fail.

1. For example:
2. The sun rises.
3. You get a text message.
4. The song you are listening to ends.
5. The sun sets.

- iv. Armed with these two lists, you can begin searching for the best place to layer your new habit into your lifestyle.
- v. Habit stacking works best when the cue is highly specific and immediately actionable. Many people select cues that are too vague.

3. Motivation Is Overrated; Environment Often Matters More

- a. It's easy not to practice the guitar when it's tucked away in the closet. It's easy not to read a book when the bookshelf is in the corner of the guest room. It's easy not to take your vitamins when they are out of sight in the pantry. When the cues that spark a habit are subtle or hidden, they are easy to ignore. By comparison, creating obvious visual cues can draw your attention toward a desired habit.
- b. Here are a few ways you can redesign your environment and make the cues for your preferred habits more obvious:
 - i. If you want to remember to take your medication each night, put your pill bottle directly next to the faucet on the bathroom counter.
 - ii. If you want to practice guitar more frequently, place your guitar stand in the middle of the living room.
 - iii. If you want to remember to send more thank-you notes, keep a stack of stationery on your desk.
 - iv. If you want to drink more water, fill up a few water bottles each morning and place them in common locations around the house.
- c. Environment design is powerful not only because it influences how we engage with the world but also because we rarely do it.
- d. Environment design allows you to take back control and become the architect of your life. Be the designer of your world and not merely the consumer of it.
- e. The cues that trigger a habit can start out very specific, but over time your habits become associated not with a single trigger but with the entire context surrounding the behavior.

- i. For example, many people drink more in social situations than they would ever drink alone. The trigger is rarely a single cue, but rather the whole situation: watching your friends order drinks, hearing the music at the bar, seeing the beers on tap.
- f. Our behavior is not defined by the objects in the environment but by our relationship to them. In fact, this is a useful way to think about the influence of the environment on your behavior. Stop thinking about your environment as filled with objects. Start thinking about it as filled with relationships. Think in terms of how you interact with the spaces around you. For one person, her couch is the place where she reads for an hour each night. For someone else, the couch is where he watches television and eats a bowl of ice cream after work. Different people can have different memories—and thus different habits—associated with the same place.
- g. It is easier to associate a new habit with a new context than to build a new habit in the face of competing cues.
 - i. It can be difficult to go to bed early if you watch television in your bedroom each night. It can be hard to study in the living room without getting distracted if that's where you always play video games. But when you step outside your normal environment,
- h. A stable environment where everything has a place and a purpose is an environment where habits can easily form.

4. [The Secret to Self-Control](#)

- a. The inversion of the 1st Law of Behavior Change is make it invisible.
- b. Once a habit is formed, it is unlikely to be forgotten.

- c. People with high self-control tend to spend less time in tempting situations.
- d. It's easier to avoid temptation than resist it.
- e. One of the most practical ways to eliminate a bad habit is to reduce exposure to the cue that causes it.
- f. Self-control is a short-term strategy, not a long-term one.

THE 2nd LAW.

MAKE IT ATTRACTIVE.

1. How to Make a Habit Irresistible?

- a. The ability to experience pleasure remained, but without dopamine, desire died. And without desire, action stopped.
- b. Habits are a dopamine-driven feedback loop. Every behavior that is highly habit-forming—taking drugs, eating junk food, playing video games, browsing social media—is associated with higher levels of dopamine. The same can be said for our most basic habitual behaviors like eating food, drinking water, having sex, and interacting socially.
 - i. For years, scientists assumed dopamine was all about pleasure, but now we know it plays a central role in many neurological processes, including motivation, learning and memory, punishment and aversion, and voluntary movement.

- c. Dopamine is released not only when you experience pleasure, but also when you anticipate it. It is the anticipation of a reward—not the fulfillment of it—that gets us to take action. The greater the anticipation, the greater the dopamine spike.”
 - i. As a child, thinking about Christmas morning can be better than opening the gifts. As an adult, daydreaming about an upcoming vacation can be more enjoyable than actually being on vacation. Scientists refer to this as the difference between “wanting” and “liking.”
- d. The 2nd Law of Behavior Change is make it attractive.”
- e. “The more attractive an opportunity is, the more likely it is to become habit-forming.”
- f. “Temptation bundling is one way to make your habits more attractive. The strategy is to pair an action you want to do with an action you need to do.”
- g. The habit stacking + temptation bundling formula is:
 - i. After [CURRENT HABIT], I will [HABIT I NEED].
 - After [HABIT I NEED], I will [HABIT I WANT].
 - ii. If you want to read the news, but you need to express more gratitude:
 - After I get my morning coffee, I will say one thing I’m grateful for that happened yesterday (need). After I say one thing I’m grateful for, I will read the news (want).

2. The Role of Family and Friends in Shaping Your Habits ?

- a. In many ways, these social norms are the invisible rules that guide your behavior each day. You're always keeping them in mind, even if they are at the not top of your mind. Often, you follow the habits of your culture without thinking, without questioning, and sometimes without remembering.
- b. The culture we live in determines which behaviors are attractive to us.**
- c. We tend to adopt habits that are praised and approved of by our culture because we have a strong desire to fit in and belong to the tribe.**
- d. We imitate the habits of three groups in particular:
 - i. The close. (Imitating the close)
 - Our friends and family provide a sort of invisible peer pressure that pulls us in their direction.
 - If you are surrounded by fit people, you're more likely to consider working out to be a common habit. If you're surrounded by jazz lovers, you're more likely to believe it's reasonable to play jazz every day. Your culture sets your expectation for what is "normal."
 - **Surround yourself with people who have the habits you want to have yourself. You'll rise together.**
 - To make your habits even more attractive, you can take this strategy one step further. **Join a culture where (1) your desired behavior is the normal behavior and (2) you already have something in common with the group.**
 - ii. The many.

- Humans are similar. There is **tremendous internal pressure to comply with the norms of the group. The reward of being accepted is often greater than the reward of winning an argument**, looking smart, or finding truth. Most days, we'd **rather be wrong with the crowd than be right by ourselves**.
- The human mind knows how to get along with others. It wants to get along with others. This is our natural mode. You can override it—you can choose to ignore the group or to stop caring what other people think—but it takes work. Running against the grain of your culture requires extra effort.
- When changing your habits means challenging the tribe, change is unattractive. When changing your habits means fitting in with the tribe, change is very attractive.

iii. The powerful.

- If a behavior can get us approval, respect, and praise, we find it attractive.

3. How to Find and Fix the Causes of Your Bad Habits?

a. Where craving comes from?

- Every behavior has a surface level craving and a deeper, underlying motive.

Underlying motives:

- Conserve energy Obtain food and water
- Find love and reproduce
- Connect and bond with others
- Win social acceptance and approval
- Reduce uncertainty
- Achieve status and prestige

- ii. The cause of your habits is actually the prediction that precedes them.
 - Feelings and emotions transform the cues we perceive and the predictions we make into a signal that we can apply.
 - A craving is the sense that something is missing. It is the desire to change your internal state.
 - To summarize, the specific cravings you feel and habits you perform are really an attempt to address your fundamental underlying motives.

b. How To Reprogram Your Brain To Enjoy Hard Habits?

- i. You can adapt this strategy for nearly any purpose. Say you want to feel happier in general. Find something that makes you truly happy—like petting your dog or taking a bubble bath—and then create a short routine that you perform every time before you do the thing you love. Maybe you take three deep breaths and smile.

c. Your habits are modern-day solutions to ancient desires:

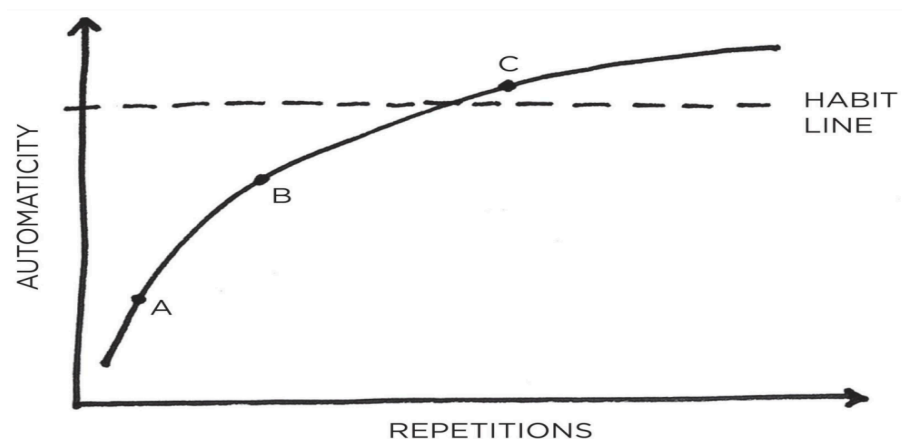
- i. Find love and reproduce = using Tinder
- ii. Connect and bond with others = browsing Facebook
- iii. Win social acceptance and approval = posting on Instagram
- iv. Reduce uncertainty = searching on Google
- v. Achieve status and prestige = playing video games

THE 3rd LAW.

MAKE IT EASY.

1. Walk Slowly, but Never Backward.

- a. As Voltaire once wrote, “The best is the enemy of the good.”
- b. Hebb’s Law: “Neurons that fire together wire together.”
- c. Repeating a habit leads to clear physical changes in the brain. In musicians, the cerebellum—critical for physical movements like plucking a guitar string or pulling a violin bow—is larger than it is in non-musicians.
- d. Each time you repeat an action, you are activating a particular neural circuit associated with that habit. This means that simply putting in your reps is one of the most critical steps you can take to encoding a new habit.
- e. All habits follow a similar trajectory from effortful practice to automatic behavior, a process known as automaticity. Automaticity is the ability to perform a behavior without thinking about each step, which occurs when the nonconscious mind takes over.



- f. The most effective form of learning is practice, not planning.
- g. Focus on taking action, not being in motion.
- h. Habit formation is the process by which a behavior becomes progressively more automatic through repetition.
- i. The amount of time you have been performing a habit is not as important as the number of times you have performed it.

2. The Law of Least Effort:

- a. In a sense, every habit is just an obstacle to getting what you really want. Dieting is an obstacle to getting fit. Meditation is an obstacle to feeling calm. Journaling is an obstacle to thinking clearly. You don't actually want the habit itself. What you really want is the outcome the habit delivers. The greater the obstacle—that is, the more difficult the habit—the more friction there is between you and your desired end state.
- b. HOW TO ACHIEVE MORE WITH LESS EFFORT
 - i. One of the most effective ways to reduce the friction associated with your habits is to practice environment design.
 - ii. Too often, we try to start habits in high-friction environments. We try to follow a strict diet while we are out to dinner with friends. We try to write a book in a chaotic household. We try to concentrate while using a smartphone filled with distractions. It doesn't have to be this way. We can remove the points of friction that hold us back.

- iii. I like to refer to this strategy as addition by subtraction. The Japanese companies looked for every point of friction in the manufacturing process and eliminated it. As they subtracted wasted effort, they added customers and revenue.
 - iv. Dating apps reduce the friction of making social introductions. Ride-sharing services reduce the friction of getting across town. Text messaging reduces the friction of sending a letter in the mail.
 - v. Like a Japanese television manufacturer redesigning their workspace to reduce wasted motion, successful companies design their products to automate, eliminate, or simplify as many steps as possible.
- c. PRIME THE ENVIRONMENT FOR FUTURE USE:
- i. Whenever you organize a space for its intended purpose, you are priming it to make the next action easy.
 - ii. There are many ways to prime your environment so it's ready for immediate use. If you want to cook a healthy breakfast, place the skillet on the stove, set the cooking spray on the counter, and lay out any plates and utensils you'll need the night before. When you wake up, making breakfast will be easy.
 - Want to draw more? Put your pencils, pens, notebooks, and drawing tools on top of your desk, within easy reach.
 - Want to exercise? Set out your workout clothes, shoes, gym bag, and water bottle ahead of time.
 - Want to improve your diet? Chop up a ton of fruits and vegetables on weekends and pack them in containers, so you have easy access to healthy, ready-to-eat options during the week.
 - iii. Summary:

- Human behavior follows the Law of Least Effort. We will naturally gravitate toward the option that requires the least amount of work.
- Create an environment where doing the right thing is as easy as possible.
- Reduce the friction associated with good behaviors. When friction is low, habits are easy.
- Increase the friction associated with bad behaviors. When friction is high, habits are difficult.
- Prime your environment to make future actions easier

3. How to Stop Procrastinating by Using the Two Minute Rule

- a. The moment you decide between ordering takeout or cooking dinner. The moment you choose between driving your car or riding your bike. The moment you decide between starting your homework or grabbing the video game controller. These choices are a fork in the road.
 - i. Many habits occur at decisive moments—choices that are like a fork in the road—and either send you in the direction of a productive day or an unproductive one.

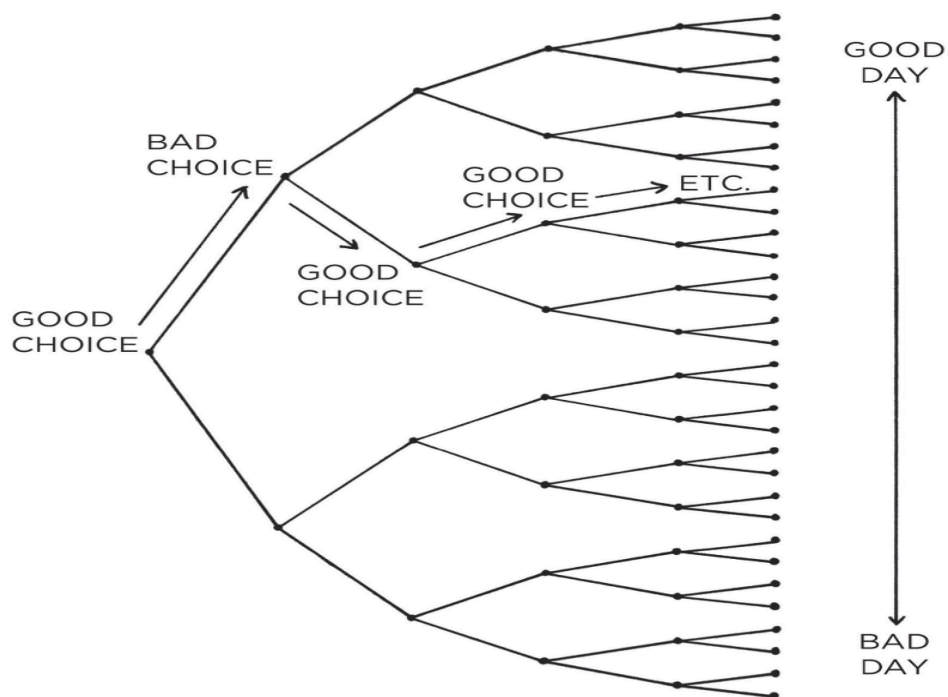


FIGURE 14: The difference between a good day and a bad day is often a few productive and healthy choices made at decisive moments. Each one is like a fork in the road, and these choices stack up throughout the day and can ultimately lead to very different outcomes.

- b. The most effective way I know to counteract this tendency is to use the Two-Minute Rule, which states, “When you start a new habit, it should take less than two minutes to do.”
- “Read before bed each night” becomes “Read one page.”
 - “Do thirty minutes of yoga” becomes “Take out my yoga mat.”
 - “Study for class” becomes “Open my notes.”
 - “Fold the laundry” becomes “Fold one pair of socks.”
 - “Run three miles” becomes “Tie my running shoes.”
 - The idea is to make your habits as easy as possible to start. Anyone can meditate for one minute, read one page, or put one item of clothing away. And, as we have just discussed, this is a powerful strategy because once you’ve started doing the right thing, it is much easier to continue doing it. A new habit should not feel like a challenge. The actions that *follow* can be challenging, but the first two minutes should be easy.

- c. The point is to master the habit of showing up.
- d. The more you ritualize the beginning of a process, the more likely it becomes that you can slip into the state of deep focus that is required to do great things.
- e. Standardize before you optimize. You can't improve a habit that doesn't exist.

4. How to Make Good Habits Inevitable and Bad Habits Impossible

- a. The inversion of the 3rd Law of Behavior Change is make it difficult.
- b. A commitment device is a choice you make in the present that controls your actions in the future. It is a way to lock in future behavior, bind you to good habits, and restrict you from bad ones
- c. Commitment devices increase the odds that you'll do the right thing in the future by making bad habits difficult in the present.
- d. The ultimate way to lock in future behavior is to automate your habits.
- e. Onetime choices—like buying a better mattress or enrolling in an automatic savings plan—are single actions that automate your future habits and deliver increasing returns over time.
- f. Using technology to automate your habits is the most reliable and effective way to guarantee the right behavior.

THE 4th LAW. **MAKE IT SATISFYING.**

1. The Cardinal Rule of Behavior Change.

- a. The 4th Law of Behavior Change is make it satisfying.
- b. We are more likely to repeat a behavior when the experience is satisfying.

- c. The human brain evolved to prioritize immediate rewards over delayed rewards.
- d. The Cardinal Rule of Behavior Change: What is immediately rewarded is repeated. What is immediately punished is avoided.
- e. To get a habit to stick you need to feel immediately successful—even if it's in a small way.
- f. The first three laws of behavior change—make it obvious, make it attractive, and make it easy—increase the odds that a behavior will be performed this time. The fourth law of behavior change—make it satisfying—increases the odds that a behavior will be repeated next time.

2. How to Stick with Good Habits Every Day.

- a. One of the most satisfying feelings is the feeling of making progress. A habit tracker is a simple way to measure whether you did a habit— like marking an X on a calendar.
- b. Habit trackers and other visual forms of measurement can make your habits satisfying by providing clear evidence of your progress.
- c. Don't break the chain. Try to keep your habit streak alive.
- d. Never miss twice. If you miss one day, try to get back on track as quickly as possible.
- e. Just because you can measure something doesn't mean it's the most important thing.

3. How an Accountability Partner Can Change Everything.

- a. The inversion of the 4th Law of Behavior Change is make it unsatisfying.
- b. We are less likely to repeat a bad habit if it is painful or unsatisfying.
- c. An accountability partner can create an immediate cost to inaction. We care deeply about what others think of us, and we do not want others to have a lesser opinion of us.
- d. A habit contract can be used to add a social cost to any behavior. It makes the costs of violating your promises public and painful. Knowing that someone else is watching you can be a powerful motivator.

ADVANCED TACTICS.

HOW TO GO FROM BEING MERELY GOOD TO BEING TRULY GREAT.

1. **The Truth About Talent (When Genes Matter and When They Don't)**
 - a. The secret to maximizing your odds of success is to choose the right field of competition. This is just as true with habit change as it is with sports and business. Habits are easier to perform, and more satisfying to stick with, when they align with your natural inclinations and abilities.
 - b. Embracing this strategy requires the acceptance of the simple truth that people are born with different abilities. Some people don't like to discuss this fact.
 - c. The strength of genetics is also their weakness. Genes cannot be easily changed, which means they provide a powerful advantage in favorable circumstances and a serious disadvantage in unfavorable circumstances.

- d. Our environment determines the suitability of our genes and the utility of our natural talents. When our environment changes, so do the qualities that determine success.
- e. The people at the top of any competitive field are not only well trained, they are also well suited to the task.
- f. Your genes are operating beneath the surface of every habit. Indeed, beneath the surface of every behavior. Bundled together, your unique cluster of genetic traits predispose you to a particular personality. Your personality is the set of characteristics that is consistent from situation to situation.

i. five spectrums of behavior.

- Openness to experience: from curious and inventive on one end to cautious and consistent on the other.
- Conscientiousness: organized and efficient to easygoing and spontaneous.
- Extroversion: outgoing and energetic to solitary and reserved (you likely know them as extroverts vs. introverts).
- Agreeableness: friendly and compassionate to challenging and detached.
- Neuroticism: anxious and sensitive to confident, calm, and stable.

- People who are high in agreeableness are kind, considerate, and warm. They also tend to have higher natural oxytocin levels, a hormone that plays an important role in social bonding, increases feelings of trust, and can act as a natural antidepressant. You can easily imagine how someone with more oxytocin might be inclined to build habits like writing thank-you notes or organizing social events.

- People who are high in neuroticism tend to be anxious and worry more than others. This trait has been linked to hypersensitivity of the amygdala, the portion of the brain responsible for noticing threats. In other words, people who are more sensitive to negative cues in their environment are more likely to score high in neuroticism.
- Our habits are not solely determined by our personalities, but there is no doubt that our genes nudge us in a certain direction. Our deeply rooted preferences make certain behaviors easier for some people than for others. You don't have to apologize for these differences or feel guilty about them, but you do have to work with them.

- Habits need to be enjoyable if they are going to stick. This is the core idea behind the 4th Law.

g. In the beginning of a new activity, there should be a period of exploration. In relationships, it's called dating. In college, it's called the liberal arts. In business, it's called split testing. The goal is to try out many possibilities, research a broad range of ideas, and cast a wide net.

i. After this initial period of exploration, shift your focus to the best solution you've found—but keep experimenting occasionally. The proper balance depends on whether you're winning or losing. If you are currently winning, you exploit, exploit, exploit. If you are currently losing, you continue to explore, explore, explore.

ii. In the long-run it is probably most effective to work on the strategy that seems to deliver the best results about 80 to 90 percent of the time and keep exploring with the remaining 10 to 20 percent.

iii. If you're pressed for time—say, as you come up on the deadline for a project—you should implement the best solution you've found so far and get some results.

h. As you explore different options, there are a series of questions you can ask yourself to continually narrow in on the habits and areas that will be most satisfying to you:

i. What feels like fun to me, but work to others?

- The work that hurts you less than it hurts others is the work you were made to do.

ii. What makes me lose track of time?

- Blend of happiness and peak performance.

iii. Where do I get greater returns than the average person?

- Results seemed to be coming faster for me than for some of my colleagues, which motivated me to keep writing.

iv. What comes naturally to me?

- “What feels natural to me? When have I felt alive? When have I felt like the real me?” No internal judgments or people-pleasing. No second-guessing or self-criticism. Just feelings of engagement and enjoyment. Whenever you feel authentic and genuine, you are headed in the right direction.

i. Specialization is a powerful way to overcome the “accident” of bad genetics. The more you master a specific skill, the harder it becomes for others to compete with you.

j. In summary, one of the best ways to ensure your habits remain satisfying over the long-run is to pick behaviors that align with your personality and skills. Work hard on the things that come easy.

k. Summary:

- i. The secret to maximizing your odds of success is to choose the right field of competition.
- ii. Pick the right habit and progress is easy. Pick the wrong habit and life is a struggle.
- iii. Genes cannot be easily changed, which means they provide a powerful advantage in favorable circumstances and a serious disadvantage in unfavorable circumstances.
- iv. Habits are easier when they align with your natural abilities. Choose the habits that best suit you.
- v. Play a game that favors your strengths. If you can’t find a game that favors you, create one.

- vi. Genes do not eliminate the need for hard work. They clarify it. They tell us what to work hard on.

2. The Goldilocks Rule: How to Stay Motivated in Life and Work.

- a) The way to maintain motivation and achieve peak levels of desire is to work on tasks of “just manageable difficulty.” The human brain loves a challenge, but only if it is within an optimal zone of difficulty.

b) THE GOLDILOCKS RULE:

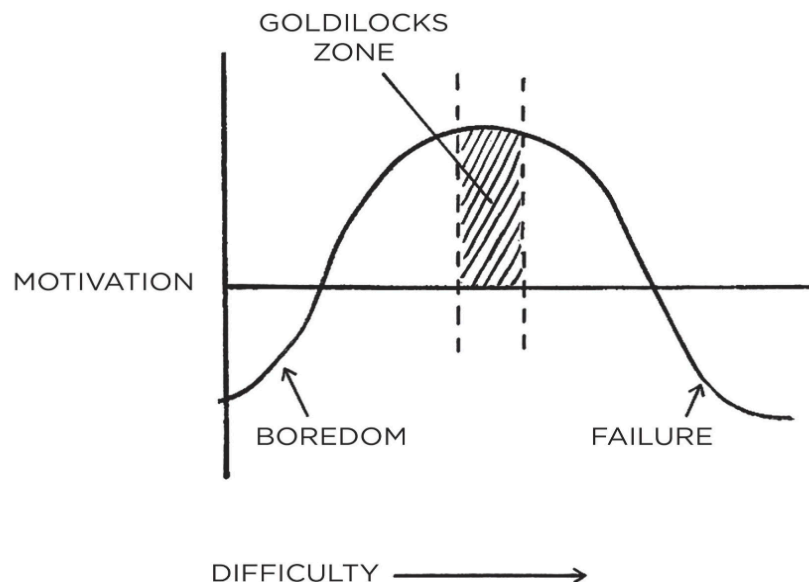


FIGURE 15: Maximum motivation occurs when facing a challenge of just manageable difficulty. In psychology research this is known as the Yerkes–Dodson law, which describes the optimal level of arousal as the midpoint between boredom and anxiety.

- c) When you’re starting a new habit, it’s important to keep the behavior as easy as possible so you can stick with it even when conditions aren’t perfect.
- d) Once a habit has been established, however, it’s important to continue to advance in small ways. These little improvements

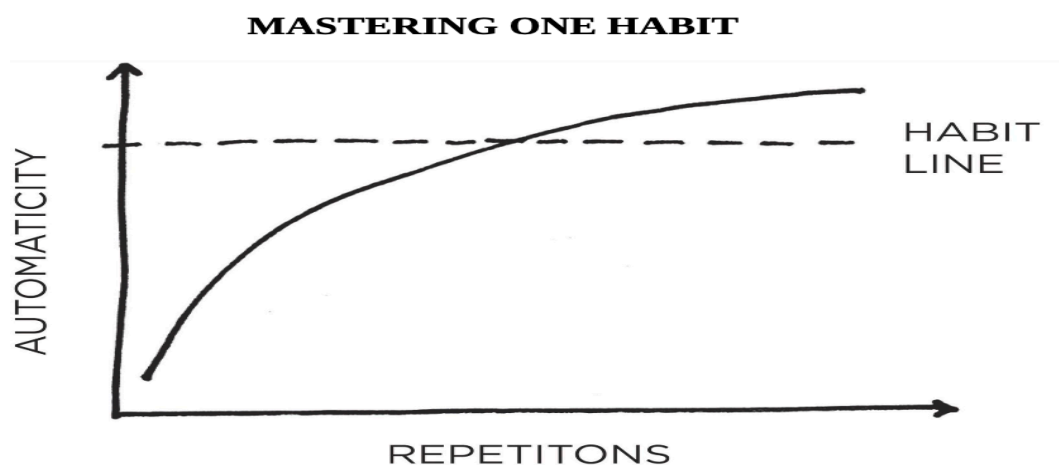
and new challenges keep you engaged. And if you hit the Goldilocks Zone just right, you can achieve a flow state.

- e) A flow state is the experience of being “in the zone” and fully immersed in an activity. Scientists have tried to quantify this feeling.
- f) They found that to achieve a state of flow, a task must be roughly 4 percent beyond your current ability.
- g) Successful people feel the same lack of motivation as everyone else. The difference is that they still find a way to show up despite the feelings of boredom.
- h) The most habit-forming products are those that provide continuous forms of novelty.
- i) Activity experiences offer continual elements of surprise (variable reward)
- j) Variable rewards or not, no habit will stay interesting forever. At some point, everyone faces the same challenge on the journey of self-improvement: you have to fall in love with boredom.
- k) Professionals stick to the schedule; amateurs let life get in the way. Professionals know what is important to them and work toward it with purpose; amateurs get pulled off course by the urgencies of life.

3. The Downside of Creating Good Habits

- a) Habits are the backbone of any pursuit of excellence.
 - However, the benefits of habits come at a cost. At first, each repetition develops fluency, speed, and skill.

- But then, as a habit becomes automatic, you become less sensitive to feedback. You fall into mindless repetition.
 - It becomes easier to let mistakes slide. When you can do it “good enough” on autopilot, you stop thinking about how to do it better.
- b) The upside of habits is that we can do things without thinking. The downside of habits is that you get used to doing things a certain way and stop paying attention to little errors.
- c) Habits are necessary, but not sufficient for mastery. What you need is a combination of automatic habits and deliberate practice.
- a. Habits + Deliberate Practice = Mastery**
- d) Mastery is the process of narrowing your focus to a tiny element of success, repeating it until you have internalized the skill, and then using this new habit as the foundation to advance to the next frontier of your development. Old tasks become easier the second time around, but it doesn't get easier overall because now you're pouring your energy into the next challenge. Each habit unlocks the next level of performance. It's an endless cycle.



MASTERING A FIELD

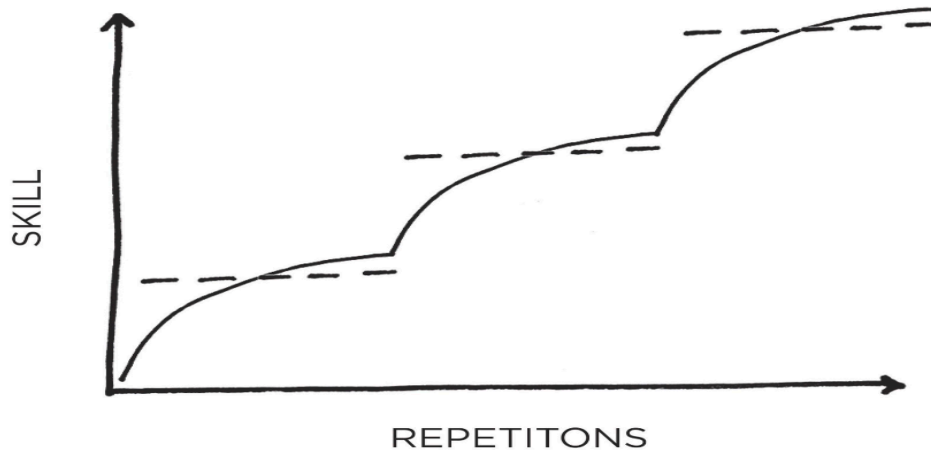


FIGURE 16: The process of mastery requires that you progressively layer improvements on top of one another, each habit building upon the last until a new level of performance has been reached and a higher range of skills has been internalized.

- e) Sustaining an effort is the most important thing for any enterprise. The way to be successful is to learn how to do things right, then do them the same way every time.
- f) Reflection and review is a process that allows you to remain conscious of your performance over time.
- g) The tighter we cling to an identity, the harder it becomes to grow beyond it.

Conclusion.

The Secret to Results That Last

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Little Lessons from the Four Laws.

1. Awareness and Desire:

- Awareness precedes desire; craving arises after assigning meaning to a cue.
- Happiness is the absence of desire, contentment with the present situation.

2. Peace and Craving:

- Peace occurs when observation doesn't lead to a desire for change.
- Craving is the urge to fix everything, while observation without craving is peaceful existence.

3. Motivation and Action:

- Strong motivation overcomes obstacles ("With a big enough why, you can overcome any how").
- Curiosity and motivation prompt action more than intelligence alone.

4. Emotion's Role:

- Emotions drive behavior; decisions are ultimately emotional.
- Rationality follows emotion; System 1 (emotions) precedes System 2 (rational analysis).

5. Suffering and Progress:

- Desire for change drives both suffering and progress.
- Satisfaction depends on the gap between craving and reward.

6. Self-Control and Satisfaction:

- Self-control often involves ignoring desires rather than satisfying them.

- Satisfaction is influenced by expectations; high expectations can lead to disappointment.

7. Happiness and Relativity:

- Happiness is relative; familiarity diminishes excitement.
- The pain of failure correlates with the height of expectation.

8. Feelings Before and After:

- Craving motivates action; reward reinforces behavior.
- Feelings influence actions, and actions influence feelings.

9. Desire and Pleasure:

- Desire initiates behavior, pleasure sustains it.
- Wanting and liking drive behavior.

10. Hope and Experience:

- Hope declines with experience, replaced by acceptance.
- Newness offers hope; experience grounds expectations.